

THE PARAMOUNT

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The *inkosi* was all this time as if he were mourning and fasting. He was in the house. His body was painted with medicines, black, red and white; and round his loins was painted with black medicine. He was kept naked except for the cover of his foreskin. They fed him with the first-fruits mixed with medicines. They said that both the Paramount and all the people were fasting and under discipline at that time. 241
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When the time for closing the *incwala* came, they again took the fruit (*gumuso*) and threw it in among the dancers and called out '*incwala seim-bonyine*', 'the *incwala* is closed'. Then the people began to separate and to go home, still with the songs on their lips, and on the way cutting juicy stalks of new maize and picking leaves of pumpkins, which meant that the new crops were set free.

These two fragments of the old *incwala* songs, which, like the war songs, were full of 'sounds' like *zi zi*, *osi ya*, were the only ones preserved. They were known only by one or two old men among the northern and central Ngoni. 241
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1. He comes the one who hates the chief.

Did you not see him?

You have seen him.

2. You who are rejected

They are carrying him lightly

To thrash him

He, the stiff-necked one.

The Royal Shadow

The special relationship between a new *inkosi* of the Maseko clan and a member of the Ngozo clan was personal and individual. I have translated it as 'royal shadow', since in discussing the relationship with leading members of the Ngozo, Nzungu and Phungwako clans the word *mtwazi* was the one most frequently used. *Mtwazi* is the term used for the shadow of a person or object cast by the sun; also for shade from the sun; also in modern phraseology for a photograph; when it is generally used in its double form, *mtwazitwazi*. In the descriptions of this relationship there seemed almost a reluctance to use a definite term. The informants kept on saying that the Ngozo boy was *wonga mtwazi*, like a shadow. While they enumerated the many things he did with the Paramount, they avoided giving him or his relationship any specific name. 643
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This relationship began at the accession of a new Paramount and lasted until his death when the Ngozo man leaped on to the funeral pyre, and it was marked by certain special features. On the death of the old Paramount, and before the new Paramount was given the medicine for strengthening him, a boy of the Ngozo clan was sent 'to enter the chieftainship' with the Paramount. Many cattle from the herd belonging to the big house were given to the Ngozo family from whom the boy 643
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766 skin of an ox, killed that very day, and bind him in it. But do not wrap it round his head, but only as far as the neck, and take the fat from the ox's belly and throw it over him. Then he is set on a stone and the cup filled with beer.

[287] The body remains in the hut four days, and bands of warriors sound their shields without ceasing. When the body begins to stink, oil is brought and poured in a dish and set fire to. On the fifth day they lift the body, the child whom the dead chief had named as his successor leads, and all the relations follow, and the wives of the dead chief. The warriors come in companies, village by village. Very old men bear the corpse. It is carried upright. When they come with it to the water, if it be running fully they do not dam it up, should it be low they dam it across with stones and mud, and down stream becomes quite dry. Then they begin to lay firewood on some rock in the stream, and bring the corpse and put it on the pile and take more wood and prop it up on the sides. When they have finished piling up the wood an old white-haired man makes fire, and when the hot ashes fall blows it into flame and sets fire to the pyre and the flames go roaring up. They place the child [and heir] where the smoke is blowing to. He stands on one leg, his shield is in his hand. When the fire bursts out in sparks the men clash their shields, and chant their war songs . . .

The shield of the chief, which he was wont to carry . . ., they burn on a fire on one side, and all his household belongings. When the fire has burned out, and the corpse is also consumed and turned to ashes, water is splashed over (the spot). Should the stream have been dammed they pull down the barrier, and all the ashes go down the *Mawi* (a river). When they see all is finished a sheep is killed, they take a wooden spoon and catch the blood and place it on the rock. Then they skin the sheep, cut it open, take the stomach, turn out the contents on the rock, and smear it over. The elders only eat the meat. When they have done this they go off to the village and kill many oxen, the people still keeping up the rolling sound with their shields. All the ornamental tufts of grass from the hut roofs belonging to the chief are removed. Next morning all the headmen shave their heads, and then the people from the different villages. The widows put on the red head-bands.

Additional details and slight variations were supplied by Habuya Dube, an old man who was official praiser of Paramount Gamani II. He was also at the funeral.

¶ After some time Cikual began to be ill and of that same illness he died. And we danced *Ngube* for one month, and over a hundred beasts were killed. For a whole week¹ he was in the house, and then soon he began to smell because he was decaying. The grave-diggers, they of the Ngomo clan, burned the fat of the cattle and roasted it on the fire, doing it as if to prevent the smell. And they made him hold a cup of beer in his hand. On a certain day we lifted him up and went with him to the water. Then

¹ Compare the previous account which gave four days between death and cremation. At Bumbo Manga's death it was three days.

THE ROYAL WOMEN

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Chief Mtswalo II in the northern kingdom. Two texts are by former big wives of leading men. NyaNsangu was the former big wife of a grandson of Zwangendaba, a member of the royal clan but not a chief, though he owned many villages. NaNdumbu was the former big wife of the head of the Nzunga clan in the central kingdom. The last text by Cibambo gives details of the clothes worn by royal women and leading women in pre-European days, some of which were still in use in the 1930's.

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631LIFE OF THE ROYAL WOMEN
by Manga Maseko159
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daughter of Mputa, former Paramount of the central kingdom

¶ Formerly I was just staying for I did not work. I had many slaves and their work was especially to thread beads. Up to today I have not worked except to cook. Our hair was anointed with the fat of cows and of milk. Our food was milk and we drank it in a wooden cup. We were getting cloth when they sold slaves to the Arabs. For honouring each other, the big men were telling the youths: 'You should honour the big people that the country may be rich.' Only the big women were dancing *ngoma*, *maido* and *ligubo*. If a man married the child of a chief, he gave many cattle, and the poor man could not marry the child of a chief.

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When NaMlangeni was alive she was a well-known chief and was greatly honoured. When speaking a case, they called her that she might judge. When people went to war and captured slaves and cattle they were giving them to her, and she divided them. For thanking her they said: 'Zaithwa Mai.'

LIFE OF THE ROYAL WOMEN
by Margaret Jere

granddaughter of Mtswalo I, daughter of Johanne Jere in the northern kingdom

¶ When I was a child I was not allowed to go out quickly in the sun, and when crawling I had to stay in the house. I was very light coloured. The *mlezi* (nurse girl) took me to my mother, UNsulazi Nzima, to be suckled at special times. I slept in the house of Magodise Moyo, my grandmother, who was the widow of Chief Mtswalo. The *isidandani* (attendant) also slept there. My grandmother and others, the *manina* (senior women), were telling me how to behave. A special *isidandani* living in Magodise's house was told by my grandmother to speak specially to me when I had reached puberty. This *isidandani* could speak to me about anything. When nearing marriage a woman was chosen, Hlamseya Nzima, and sent to reveal to me how I was to live in my married state. The sisters of my father, Tinzira and Sayeya Jere, also came and spoke to me at the time of my marriage. Hlamseya Nzima was sent by my grandmother to examine me (for virginity) before marriage. I was allowed to play with those children who lived in the same section of the village and who were known to my mother and grandmother. The *isidandani* did all the work but sometimes I used to pound and fetch water, but not too hard and just for pleasure.

When strangers came, I came and saluted them and then went out of

159 the house. If my father came to my mother's house, I would go out, but
565 if he sent for me I would return and he would talk to me and play with
631 me. We learned how to behave well, and were rebuked if we behaved
644 badly. My father would beat a child for not behaving well. My father did
not allow his children to be spoiled by being treated differently from
others. He said: "They are all my children."

LIFE OF THE ROYAL WOMEN

by Mdingase Naangu

widow of Chinombo Jere, grandson of Zwangendaba in the
northern kingdom

565 ¶ The *amakhosikazi* were not working. During the day they kept dressing
631 their hair, both the young women and the old. The old women no longer
644 kept their *isihlulu*, or high chignon, but wore the *umzoco*, or long curls.
[308] For the *umzoco* the hair was cut short and not allowed to grow very long.
Instead of dressing it upwards they took a blade of grass and kept it
pressed down after oil and scent were applied. Their other work was to
go to the river and wash.

They also drank beer and some gruel, and afterwards danced *ngoma* in
the house where beer was brewed. The men and chief also joined in the
ngoma and the women were responding to the singing. They began to
drink in the morning until the afternoon, but not in the evening. Other
people went on drinking until evening, and even some of the *amakhosikazi*
who were *isidli* (gluttonous) but the rest were sleeping or resting.

When drinking in the house the chief always sat by the right-hand door-
post, and the big *inkosikazi* by the left-hand post. They sat near the door
to draw breath easily because there were many people inside. The beer-
pot being set halfway between the door and the hearth-stones in the
centre, a man was chosen to pour the beer in the gourds for drinking. He
was *umtele wocwala*, the beer pourer, and was often the village *induna* or
one who was favoured by the chief. When the gourds were full he told the
chief, and the chief told him to distribute them. Sometimes there were
four or even six for the different classes in the house. They sat in order,
the *inkosi* with the *isinduna* and *amadoda*, and the *inkosikazi* with the other
wives of the chief and the wives of the *isinduna* and *amadoda*. The chief
and the *inkosikazi* kept on inviting the common people to come and drink.
[576] Such invited people thanked the person at the beginning and at the end,
others joining him. The *inkosikazi* or other wives of the chief were
thanked 'Nhomu'.

The *amakhosikazi* never worked at all, but the lesser wives worked, and
pounded grain and fetched firewood. These were the ones who had not
yet got attendants in their houses. All the chief *amakhosikazi* had attendants
who performed all the work of the house. The *amakhosikazi* often sat in the
verandah or outside under the platform of branches supported by posts.
[622] There they ate their food which was *ilambazi* and *umnjini*, thick gruel of
millet; *isinkwa ze nyauti*, bulrush millet ground to a paste; or *isinkobe*,
whole grains of maize boiled and pounded. The meat was eaten as a feast
on the *egcakeni*, the smeared place in front of the house, and all the chief's
wives joined in. A mat was spread for the big *amakhosikazi* where they sat

THE ROYAL WOMEN

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when eating meat. The lesser wives sat on the ground, which was cleaned and smeared often with cow's dung.

The second *induna* of the village was the one who put the meat on the *ingcwembe*, or big platter of the *inhosi*, and placed it before her. She herself or her *akhazi* (co-wife) divided the meat for the other women, the wife of the *induna* helping her. After they had eaten, each *inhosi* called for an *ingcwembe* from her house for the meat to be given to her attendants.

THE LIFE OF THE ROYAL WOMEN
by NaNdumbu

*formerly the big wife of the late Chief Njolomole Nzungu I
in the central kingdom*

¶ Old Njolomole had many wives, great and small. His huts were well made, and in the middle was the 'big house'. They made a fence to go round all the huts, and its appearance was very good. [361
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He was fond of sitting on the *bualo*, and all his wives cooked *nsima* and took many baskets to the *bualo*. He himself ate alone, but afterwards gave food to the big people and they in turn to the children who were waiting on the *bualo*. If a stranger came, he did not lack food, for the chief gave food to strangers and beer. So all strangers praised his behaviour. And he was known far and wide in the land for his comely behaviour. [574]

When the days for *ngoma* were near he was going to the stores to buy many cloths to divide them to all his wives. Especially he was giving them to NaNdumbu his big wife to divide. Those cloths were all of one kind. On the day of dancing *ngoma* all the women wore these cloths and came on the *bualo* with the chief. The people were astonished to see the women dressed alike. Njolomole excelled among all the people, and all praised him.

In the hut of NaNdumbu there were girls to sweep and to pound, and NaNdumbu was just sitting, no pounding for her.

Njolomole was very fond of hunting and when he killed animals in the hunt he divided them among his wives. Then he died and left his wives. From that time his wives have been very poor, and some have gone away to their own homes. Those who are here have been married by other men. Although the men dance *ngoma*, those women cannot dance: it because they were greatly praised when they danced with fine cloths, but they cannot dance with poor cloths, no. So when people dance they just look on. Those women can dance *ngoma* in other villages, but here in their own village, no. Because they grieve very much to see the tomb of their husband who was dancing with them.

THE CLOTHING OF WOMEN
by Yesaya Cibambo

¶ Today Ngoni women are not easily recognized because they have taken foreign customs of clothing. Long ago Ngoni women were easily distinguished by their hair. They did not shave their hair except when their husband died. It was washed carefully and oiled and combed upwards to the top of the head in the *isihlutu*. The oil was *ipehla*, clarified butter. This was done every two or three days, or every day if they were grand women. They decorated it with small strings of beads dangling from a [301]

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THE NGONI POLITICAL SYSTEM

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thorn stuck at the top of the *isihlutsu*, and round it they put narrow bands of beads (*isinyaya* and *isincwayo*) arranged in layers. Royal women wore leopard and lion claws among the beads. Round the neck and on the arms they wore coils of brass wire (*amasongo*) which they got from the Arabs, or *isipote*, strings of beads wound round a piece of cloth. The kilt of soft dressed leather (*isidwaba*) reached from the waist to the knee, and wrapped well over. A long piece of soft leather (*ingcayi*) was fastened on the left shoulder and reached a little below the knees. On the edges of the *ingcayi* were fastened small bells made of brass (*mgomani*). Ngoni women did not like to cut their bodies with tattoo marks. They said it was ugly. The *inkosikazi* might decorate other wives at the *ngoma* dance because she had a large store of beads and wire and leather cloths.

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The common features of the life of leading women as illustrated in these texts were: the number of attendants and servants in their households and their consequent freedom from manual work; the etiquette surrounding life in the *indlunkulu* and the big house, and the formality of hospitality, beer-drinks and dances; relationships with their *induna*, and with their husbands, and, as illustrated by Margaret Jere, with the paternal grandmother who supervised their upbringing when they were young.

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In addition to the *induna* in charge of the big house, the royal women and leading women in the villages of chiefs and *ahumuzana* were surrounded by a number of young girls and serving women. These were known in pre-European days as domestic slaves or servants (*micetho*), girl companions (*isidandani*), nurse girls (*alesi*) and older women attendants (*agogo*). Informants said that in pre-European days there were fifteen or twenty girls in each royal household and the number was constantly being added to when female slaves were captured in war and allocated as servants to the Paramount's wives. All the texts in this chapter refer to the fact that the royal women and the leading women did no work, and there was always a nostalgic refrain from senior women informants about the time devoted to hair-dressing and beauty treatments, to 'just sitting', and to dancing and drinking beer, while all the household tasks and the care of the children fell to the servants. The Ngoni royal women, even in the 1930's, commanded the labour of six to ten women and girls in each household. The hard physical work of fetching firewood and water, pounding grain, preparing vegetables and often cooking too, was done largely by servants in the Paramount's and chief's villages where I stayed. There were young nurse girls and older women to help with the children and with the adolescent girls. There were no longer any domestic slaves, and the domestic helpers, who were often distant relatives of the wives, appeared to enjoy the prestige of being attached to an important house.

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The royal women in pre-European days were distinguished by the clothes and ornaments they wore which were reserved for the royal

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too closely because of the still bitter feeling against Europeans for having caused the Paramount's death. It was quite clear, however, that since this essential step in the recognition of an ancestral spirit had been omitted at the time of his death, it was considered important to make good the omission, and the 'opening' of the grave appeared as the logical occasion.

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In Mcakhatha village I witnessed a ritual second shaving for a man of the Nzunga clan, a son of the former chief, Njolomole I. This man had been absent from the village for many years, having left as a young man still living in the *laweni*, and his death in the south was reported by letter from a fellow villager to his relatives in the village. When the letter was received, a diviner was consulted and he advised a sacrifice to the spirits. The first ritual shaving of all members of the Nzunga clan and their affines took place as it would have done on the day after burial if he had died in the village, and a beast was killed and the meat offered to the spirits and ritually eaten. The women of the Nzunga clan and the wives and widows of Nzunga men put on *xitambo* or mourning caps. Six months later the diviner was consulted again, and a day was fixed for the second shaving 'to bring back the spirit'. The spirits of the Nzunga clan were addressed, the beast selected for the sacrifice urinated, the spirits 'agreed', and the shaving of the Nzunga clan members and their affines took place; this time the whole head was shaved whereas the first shaving was only a small patch on the temple. The men were shaved by the kraal, the women near the hut of the dead man's mother which was uninhabited. The women who were relatives or affines of the deceased took off their *xitambo* and unravelled the threads of which the caps were made, collecting in front of each a little heap of hair and thread. Then one of the leading women got up and said 'Tiyeni (Let us go)', and the women went in procession to the stream, each carrying her little handful of hair and thread. As they passed they pulled a handful of dry grass from the roof of the hut by which they had been sitting to start their fires. By the stream each of the former mourners, eleven in all, made a fire of grass and dried leaves lit from a bunch of smouldering grass carried by one of them, put on it the threads and hair and tended the fire until only ashes were left. All these eleven women stood erect behind their fires facing the stream, except when bending down to fan the flames. When the fires died down each woman swept the ashes into the stream with her hand and splashed water on the site of the fire until no trace was left, lifting overhanging branches to leave a free passage for the ashes on to the water. The leading widow, a descendant of NaNdumbu, the famous woman diviner of Mputa's day, took a look round to see if all traces of the fires had gone, said 'We have finished', and led the way to the washing pool where all the women washed their clothes and their bodies. Meantime the men had been to wash in the stream on the other side of the village and had also burned their hair

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When the beer was ready, Lopati took from Bambo Manga's hut the gourd cup (another of the ritual objects kept there), filled it with beer and offered it to the spirit of NaQwana, and left it at the right side of the hut where the corpse had been set upright before the burial. Cups of beer from the other houses who were brewing were also put in the hut and drunk during the night by the old women who had slept there continuously since the death of Bambo Manga in order to guard her spirit. The next morning the *ligubo* (war-dance) was danced by the grave at the edge of the kraal. When the time came for shaving, the men were shaved, first a small lock as at the first shaving, and then the whole head. The women were shaved over the whole head and cut the strings of their *xitambo* and unravelled the threads. Ritual washing at the stream and burning of the hair and threads took place as described earlier, but in this case the *nsezo* from the beast killed at the death of Bambo Manga was burned on the same fires. Part of the *nsezo* had been put round her neck for the burial, but part had been hung at the back of the hut, and this was now taken down and divided up to be burned.

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In the final part of the ceremony the men danced *ligubo* in the courtyard of Bambo Manga's hut, while the old women danced *umsindo* at her grave. All this went on for four days as long as the beer lasted, and the way was then clear for bringing back the spirit. The spirit had been 'guarded' in the hut where the old women slept, lest if it were empty the spirit might depart. The spirit was there, but not quite there, and could not be addressed as an ancestral spirit until the final 'bringing back'.

After the second shaving the leading men of the village had a new hut built in which Ciabwe Maseko, the daughter of Cikusi and older sister of Paramount Gomani I, was installed as guardian of the spirit of Bambo Manga. They bought new baskets, cups and a fire-stick, and destroyed the old ones. After the diviner had been consulted and had appointed a day for the sacrifice, a beast was killed and the meat offered to the spirit of Bambo Manga in the new hut in the new baskets. A sheep was killed at the same time and the meat of both was eaten by the men and boys.

We have now seen the process by which the living descendants and kin of a dead person recognized the spirit of that person as an ancestral spirit. This, as we saw, was no automatic process following on death. Ceremonies had to be undertaken and rituals performed which, through successive stages, brought the spirit of the dead into such relationship with the living that they could offer sacrifices and call on its name in the naming of the ancestors in the cult. These were acts performed by the living for the dead to cause the spirit to be settled in a place it knew and guarded by someone held in respect, and the living community hoped the spirit was therefore content and happy and ready to be approached and addressed as an ancestral spirit.

CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

851 small bitter thorn apple and mixing in castor oil. This was
 [842] applied with a feather to the baby's navel.
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When the cord dropped the baby's head was shaved, and
 [302] the mother shaved a little hair round her temples. Then
 [515] they washed carefully, using sweet-smelling soapy leaves,
 oiled the baby's skin, put on clean clothes, and came out of
 the hut door and sat on a clean mat outside. This first public
 coming out of the hut took place in the late afternoon, so
 that the men, after their work was finished, could come to
 'salute the new stranger'. The husband and his brothers
 were the first to come, and this was the first time he had seen
 the baby. They brought small presents such as a fowl or a
 [431] basket of flour, and always strings of beads which were tied
 round the baby's wrists and ankles, neck and waist. The
 word used for these little gifts was 'to give a present just for
 [177] pleasing', and Ngoni Christians when speaking of such
 presents to new babies likened them to the gifts brought by
 the Magi to the infant Christ.

While the husband and his immediate kinsmen came to
 greet the baby at the hut door, the senior men of the village
 stayed by the gate of the kraal. After the cattle had come
 [554] back that evening and the kraal gates were shut, the grand-
 [603] mother carried the baby to the gate and presented him to
 [431] the senior men who responded by giving small presents to
 the child. This was always done if the baby was a boy, but
 sometimes omitted for girls.

864 When small children seeing the new baby on its mother's
 lap asked where it came from, they were always told that
 the mother had found it by the river in the rushes on the
 bank. The object of this reply, so Ngoni women said, was to
 hide the secret of birth from the children and stop them
 asking further questions. The Ngoni culture pattern of child-
 hood innocence required that children should be kept in
 ignorance of birth and sexual intercourse while they were
 young. By adults therefore they were put off with stories of
 finding the baby on the river bank. As usual, however, in

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960

FR5 Ngoni FR5

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● 302
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12. Chiefs' wives wearing leopard claws

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13. Chiefs' wives leading in the dance

[facing page 65]

FAMILY LIFE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

choice and variety of food, was primarily to please him, and to meet the incessant claims on his hospitality when visitors came. A well-ordered and harmonious household also pleased him, and conversely the sounds of women quarrelling angered him and violated his canons of accepted Ngoni behaviour. It was his wife's task to supervise the household helpers, who were mostly non-Ngoni, and to make them conform to Ngoni patterns by controlling their rages, instead of yelling at each other and hurling accusations of witchcraft at those with whom they were angry. [183]

Ngoni women also took a serious view of another aspect of pleasing their husbands, namely attention to their person and dress. The old elaborate hair-dressing of Ngoni women, the scrupulous washing of their bodies with sweet-smelling leaves, the use of oil and clarified butter on the skin and hair, and the careful tying and draping of cloths and arranging of bead headbands and necklaces—these all were forms of beauty treatment and personal hygiene designed to please the husband. They also reinforced the self-respect and authority of well-born Ngoni women, marking them out by their well-groomed appearance from the 'workers' and 'helpers' who surrounded them. 562 593 302 515 301 [565]

The young Ngoni child, up to the age of six or seven, grew up in a women's world of the kind just described. His mother was learning from his paternal grandmother the increasing duties and responsibilities of an Ngoni wife, although she was supposed to have learned some of them in her own home from her mother before marriage. We saw in Chapter II how the social horizons of a small Ngoni child were never of a narrow type, restricted to his individual family. The care of a child especially between the time of weaning and the coming of second teeth, was the concern of a number of women in addition to his own mother, from whom he was snatched away at weaning, and, for a time at least, kept away from her household for eating and sleeping. 602 355 [606]

Among the female population of a village most nearly [561]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960

FR5 Ngoni FR5

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14. Mother and babies

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[facing page 96]

15. Nursemaids with their charges

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960

FR5 Ngoni FR5

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16. Traditional hair style

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17. Girls sitting correctly [facing page 97]

VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

given to giggling and putting their head on one side when asked questions. They took their school work seriously in order to show that they, the Ngoni girls, were the intelligent ones. They were also aware that the number of cattle to be transferred at their marriage would be greater according to whether they finished school in Standard II, III, IV, or even VI. 561
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Apart from going to school, which was only for the daughters of relatively forward-looking Ngoni fathers, the girls continued to take part in the daily routine of the household. They and their companions, according to their growth and strength and pleasure, did a little pounding, fetching water, grinding grain, roasting ground-nuts. In a large household, where there were many helpers, the daughters of the family only did as much as they felt inclined of the domestic chores. As they said: 'It was like our play.' They spent more time with the young children, or washing themselves and their clothes by the stream. Combing and dressing their hair, rubbing fat or oil on their skin, threading beads, plaiting grass or fibres, learning how to make Ngoni bead designs for head bands or wristlets—all these formed the lighter and more amusing side of the daily routine. 561
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From among the girls in this exclusive and protected girls' circle, Ngoni girls chose a particular friend, whom they always addressed as 'my friend', even if she were a classificatory sister or cousin. As with the boys in the dormitory this friend was a confidante to whom a girl could talk freely about her life in the compound, her likes and dislikes among the other girls and women, her ideas about suitors and marriage. The friend was always from another compound and of a leading Ngoni clan. The two friends made bracelets and necklets for each other, and went to bathe in the stream together. Sometimes the friendship lasted until the girls were married and separated. At times it broke up suddenly in a violent quarrel. There was however a curious tenacity about these friendship pacts, and they were more often maintained 572

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (1)

behaviour especially to elders, and to enforce by dramatic 881
and sometimes brutal means a submissive attitude towards 171
authority. That objective, as we have seen, was carried out
by the Ngoni throughout their training of their children,
from the earliest age upwards. They were half amused and
half scandalized at the idea that young people had to be put
in a camp in the bush in order to teach them how to behave.

Cultural changes in the assumption of adult roles

It is necessary to look back for a moment to the Ngoni past 177
in order to see how changed external conditions in Nyasa- 561
land had altered the sequences and the timing of the process
by which youths and young girls were recognized as adults.
The stages of arriving at social maturity had been speeded 641
up by cultural changes. In the days of warfare the senior 561
herd-boys, from about twenty years of age, were called up at [702]
irregular intervals to form a new regiment. From this time
they were known as 'young men' or 'youths', and they
fought in the tribal wars for five years. In the off-season, [464]
during the rains when raids were not carried out, they were
called to clear and cultivate the gardens of the Paramount
and chiefs, and to help build houses and fence cattle kraals.
At approximately the age of twenty-six to twenty-eight they 885
were ordered to take the head-ring, the form of dressing the [302]
hair which formerly marked a married Ngoni man, and they
were told they could marry and retire from the army. The
older Ngoni declared that young men were not allowed to [836]
sleep with girls at all until they joined the army. Even then
the relationship had to be initiated by the girl expressing her
preference for a lover, and then sex relations were limited to
partial intercourse. It was at marriage, after having been given
the head-ring, that Ngoni youths were called 'men'. They
moved out of the dormitory and built a hut for their wives [591]
in the area behind the huts belonging to their father's house.
The cattle handed over on their marriage to the bride's [583]
family were taken from the herd belonging to that house.

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (II)

been warned ahead to pound maize and make yeast of ²⁷³ sprouting finger millet. They then embarked on a three-day cooking programme in large pots over a log fire in the compound. 'Sweet' beer with a low alcoholic content was drawn off after the first cooking, and the rest was left to simmer and ferment until it was of the correct thickness, flavour, and alcoholic strength.

Ngoni women's crafts

Formerly when the Ngoni used leather for clothing, their ²⁸¹ women took over the skins after they had been dressed, rubbed in fat and oil to make them soft, and darkened them with charcoal made of maize stalks. They then cut and ²⁹⁴ sewed the circular skirts which had a number of gores. The ¹⁷⁷ use of cloth, bought first from the Arabs and later from European and Indian traders, entirely replaced the former leather clothing, but senior Ngoni women still had a strong preference for a heavy dark blue cloth which they thought resembled the former leather.

Two special skills were maintained by high-born Ngoni ³⁰¹ families and they carefully trained their girls in them. One ^[531] was the use of beads, threaded and sewn together to form standardized geometrical patterns, many of which had particular significance as denoting a leaf, an eye, a horn of a cow. These beads of different sizes in strong colours of red, yellow, green, blue, as well as black and white, were made into headbands, wristlets, belts, collars, and the bead 'waist-coats' worn by the men in their war-dances. Each Ngoni bride expected to take to her new home at least one food basket which she had elaborately embroidered with beads in these standard designs.

The other skill to which we have referred more than once ³⁰² was that of beauty treatment. Ngoni women despised and disliked the local custom of facial markings and body markings. They treated their skin with clarified fat or butter, and ^[412] combed their hair with long thorns or bone combs. After

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302 washing they applied the fat to their hair and combed it out, de-linking it now and then with strips of bamboo bound tightly to the head. They scented their hair with the juice of sweet-smelling leaves, and dressed it formerly in the high chignon. As they gave that up, they took to wearing headcloths of different-coloured cloth so arranged that [301] beadbands across the forehead could be worn. Ngoni girls needed no urging to take this beauty treatment very seriously, and before a big *ngoma* dance, gave it much time and thought.

554 Only the big wives and elder sisters of chiefs could wear
301 the necklace and headpiece of leopard or lion claws. They were the distinguishing mark of an Ngoni 'princess' or 'queen'.

The art of cleanliness

181 I have called this section an 'art' because the Ngoni took
356 an aesthetic pleasure in achieving and maintaining certain
515 standards in their homes and in their persons, which were
182 held up to young adults as being highly desirable. This emphasis on a particular kind of cleanliness, while putting up with much that was not clean in their surroundings, was only one of several inconsistencies in Ngoni culture. The appreciation of a desire for this kind of cleanliness had not necessarily any connexion with hygienic cleanliness. It was more closely associated with the Ngoni love of orderliness and scrupulous attention to detail in the appearance of persons and places. It was also connected with what they regarded as comfort and good living. The effect of mission teaching about health and sanitation, and of government [751] courses held for chiefs to instruct them in modern welfare measures, often caused confusion among Ngoni elders. Sometimes their traditional standards of cleanliness coincided with modern hygienic standards, and sometimes they did not. In any case it was seldom that Europeans recognized that the Ngoni had any standards to begin with, and they

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827 gardens was not required of most Ngoni women, though they
 577 were expected to know by experience how to hoe and to
 pound, to mud walls and to clean a house in order to super-
 vise their helpers and to see that household work was done
 efficiently.

577 In addition to being healthy, the ideal Ngoni woman was
 581 always well-groomed. She might lack the facial formation
 [826] of high cheek-bones, narrow nose and deep-set eyes and the
 light bronze colouring which were the accepted standards
 of beauty. Even without these natural, usually inherited,
 advantages she spent, as we have seen, much time every day
 [302] taking care of her skin and hair. When she was receiving
 visitors or sitting outside her hut, her two long cloths, one
 [291] fastened under the armpits and the other over one shoulder
 and knotted on the chest, were carefully draped and
 arranged. If she walked to another compound or out of the
 village on the road, or walked or danced in any ceremony,
 [516] her dignity of bearing and poise of head was always marked.
 She did not hurry, but, as the Ngoni said, 'she walked
 strongly'. A government official passing an octogenarian
 [481] Ngoni princess on the road stopped and offered her a lift
 in his car. She looked him up and down and said: 'Thank
 you, young man. I can still walk.'

577 Many references have been made already to the relation-
 ship between a wife and her husband, and between a wife,
 602 especially a young one, and her husband's relatives. The
 keynotes of this relationship were devotion to her husband,
 respect for his relatives, and circumspection in her relations
 with her co-wives and with her non-Ngoni helpers. Jealousy
 between co-wives was recognized by the Ngoni but not
 condoned, and the young wife at marriage was warned by
 her own family against quarrelling with anyone, co-wives,
 helpers or in-laws, though the last was almost unthinkable.

577 Competence in household management, being a success-
 592 ful 'châtelaine', made many demands on a Ngoni woman if
 she were to live up to what was considered an ideal house

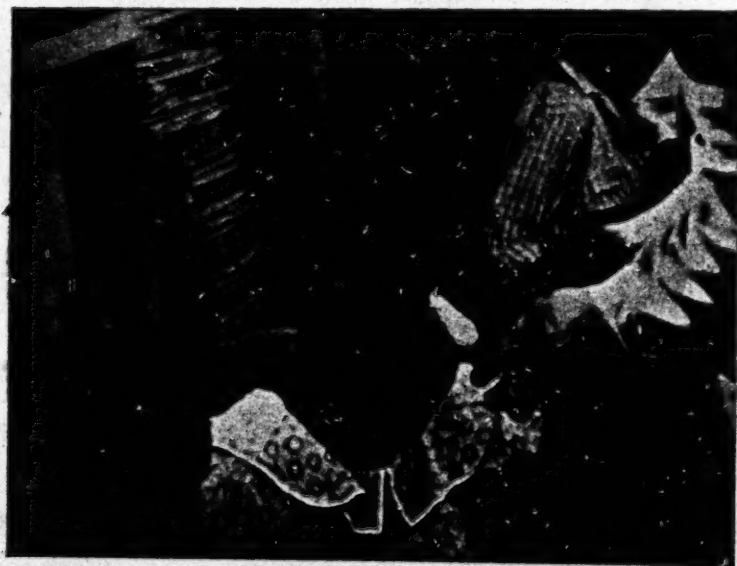
4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

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III. Anointing the bride's feet with gall. The master of ceremonies rubs gall over the bride, who sits on a mat between a woman of her party and the guide.

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IV. The gall-bladder is safely pinned in the bride's hair. Thus decorated, she will return to her own village.

[Facing p. 127]

765
273 commands silence, saying, "You have all met together here, look well to what I say. We are a people in affliction, let no one stir up discord; he who has adultery in his heart let him not commit it here, but at his own village." When it is dawn, some more beer, [called] the "bather of the eyes," is brought out. When the sun begins to get hot, all the chief mourners assemble, and a pot of beer, called the "shaving beer," is produced, and some [300] is poured into a potsherd and used like water (for shaving), that the chief mourners may use it for shaving a small patch from each person's head, and when this is done, one shaves his companion. The womenfolk shave at the hut of the deceased. The widows alone shave their heads somewhere in the bush, and remove the "red" head-bands, and put on new ones, smeared with oil, and go to the water to bathe. Should there still be some beer remaining they again pass the night dancing, that it may be quickly finished, so that the villagers may resume cohabitation with their wives. The widows no longer go to the bush to lament, and they are privileged to commit adultery, provided they remove the head-bands.

V. When they have passed another month, they then begin to hurry on the women, saying, "Now you must make haste with the malt." This beer is that for "bringing back the spirit," and for "knocking down the deceased's hut." When it is 765 ready they put it in a new hut that has been built beside the one the man died in. The elders then meet together in the hut, and one speaks as follows [to the spirit], "This is your new abode, these children you must guard from harm, and not, when they are walking, cause to fall over a snag; should you wish to ask for anything send the (harmless) *mshawa* snake, or the lizard, or the chameleon, and

thrown away the day she comes out of the *tsimba* hut.) 881

II. On the seventh day, before dawn, one of the old women rises and makes a shrill noise with her tongue, then old matrons only collect and go with the girl to the stream. Should the maiden formerly have been of an insolent nature, she is tied up in a bundle of grass and thrown into the water. The old women warm themselves over a fire on the bank. When the sun gets hot, she is taken out, and set on the bank, and they commence to dance and pull her about, and reprove her, saying, "You there, listen; I sent you to go and draw water for me, and you refused. You said, 'I am not a slave.' But could you have come to the water here to-day? She who has brought you here, is not she that very old creature?" Then she is given all sorts of advice. When they have finished they shave her head and pubes, and rub her with oil and adorn her with beads. Then the old woman who is head of the ceremony takes her up on her back, and as they go they sing—

" Wrinkles, mother, wrinkles,
I was at my own home, and never a wrinkle,
I came among the Angoni,
I saw wrinkles, [539]
Wrinkles, O! [533]
Things like this all fall on me.
Maiden cluck like an old sitting hen;
How can I cluck, I am only a young bird?
Cluck."

When they come with her to her mother's house, they sing—

" Tumbling about the things in her mother's hut.
In the hut that is no longer here."

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porridge for them and it is refused, and they spear goats for them and they eat. Next day they go home. They of the girl's village tell them, saying, "You will hear from us." Now, if the malt for the beer be in readiness, they do not sleep many days, but if not, they let a moon pass. On the day on which the beer is strained they go and call the bodyguard of young warriors, and they come along with the husband (to be) to drink the beer. The man who is to marry the girl they go and hide away in a hut on the edge of the village along with his betrothed, and the beer for them will be drawn in a little pot.

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[302]

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III. Now every one comes together at the village court and bring goats. The betrothed sits on a mat. Her grandmother shaves her head, leaving a round patch of hair on the crown. When she has finished shaving her one of the men from the man's village steps out and begins to kill some goats. Should a goat not die immediately it is beaten. Then the goats are skinned, and they take a spleen and let drops fall from it on the head of the girl, and then inflate all the spleens. They take the fat from the belly, and spread it in the sun to dry. Towards evening they take the girl and go with her to the Kaka hut, and there they take a frothy medicine, called *chitundu*, and the girl bathes with it, and her little watchman bathes also, and he (the child) takes the spleens and the fat, the inflated spleens are fastened on the girl's head and the fat over her shoulders and under her arms. The little child, when he has finished tying them on, is beaten by the men from the man's village (playfully). Then one of the village elders gets up and speaks, saying, "There you have your mother, we give her you to-day; she is subject to no disease, her illnesses consist of occasional headaches. Should she

/10 cont'd/

304 tribal mark and a hole made for individual ornamentation. Earrings,
[301] beads, and other ear ornaments are worn, including safety pins.
[304] Young girls from time to time make black rectangular marks on their
[302] cheeks by pressing on to them strips of nkhososa grass. These marks
are quite black at first, and gradually lose their colour over a period
of a year. Scarification of the face and body is carried out on both
men and women for ornament as well as for medication, but there
[331] is very little regularity of pattern, save for the inverted crescent
[619] mark made between the eyebrows of women. This is the Nsenga
tribal mark.

For dancing, most people wear their best clothes, and girls
535 and young women carry whistles on lanyards round their necks.
When dancing ngoma, the most important tribal dance, miniature
shields are carried, and a special type of knobbed stick that is held
aloft. Less frequently seen are the wrist and ankle trappings, and
skin garments that used to be associated with this and other regimen-
tal dances. Nowadays, women's skirts and frocks are sometimes seen
worn by men on such occasions.

Single-ended and double-ended drums are used as accompani-
534 ments to dancing, while boys play hand pianos. Girls play on a
single string fiddle made from a reed. Whistles are bought from the
stores. Old fashioned fiddles with gourd resonators are rare.

Boys spend much of their time making and playing with toys
524 of various kinds. Animals, men, and motor cars are fashioned out
of mud, while more elaborate motor cars are made from mealie
stalks. A favourite toy consists of two wheels, up to six inches in
diameter, on an axle with a handle some four or five feet long,
terminated in another wheel of the same size. This construction,
made of straw, representing the elements of a motor car, is pushed
along by boys of ages four to ten.

The well-known game, involving four rows of twelve holes,
with three stones in each hole, is played by men, usually in holes
scooped out in the ground. A favourite game of girls and boys con-
sists of throwing up beans with one hand and catching them again

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The Angoni men collect little bunches of hair together and bind them with grass so that they stick up all over the head or are restricted to the front part of the scalp where, when they get long, they hang down over the face. Fancy hair shaving is never seen among the women except those recently from the coast. There is no particular sex difference in methods of "doing the hair"; the coiffure is not altered after marriage and no wigs are used, neither are any colours used to adorn the hair. Ornaments worn in the hair are few, occasionally some bead-work by young girls or a feather by boys, and more especially Angoni. Combs, ornaments with bead-work are found.



FIG. 7.

(a) Chipaka, "Tumbuka"; (b) Angoni ♂; (c) Atonga ♀; (d) Makauja and Machinga ♀ "Mikulu"; (e) A man who has attended one Malive and must attend another in a few days; (f) Fanthai shaving; (g) New-born child.

The amount of hair on the face is very variable, and the treatment of it equally so. As a rule there is little, if any. Epilation is commonly practised and a strong growth of hair is shaved. On the other hand beards, etc., of considerable size are seen sometimes, and these are usually not trimmed. The longest beard I measured was 38 cm. from the chin to tip. It was kept rolled up.

The Atonga seem to have more hair on face than other tribes, their moustaches resembling those seen on Japanese.

Body.—Beads are worn by nearly every woman, either at the neck or round the wrist or the waist.

A string of large blue beads is most commonly worn round the neck by girls and women after *Jayaga*. At initiation ceremonies ropes of small blue beads are sometimes worn. These worn round the body are single strings of beads of various kinds. They are not always worn, and the wearing I think is discontinued during menstruation.

Bead aprons are found. Beads round wrists and ankles are worn in simple strings. Dancing boys sometimes wear a bead necklace, otherwise beads are never seen on males.